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Introduction to the special issue on emotional intelligence

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Over the past several meetings of the International Society for the Study of Individual Differences, research on emotional intelligence (EI) has featured prominently in symposia, individual papers and posters. Many of the leading researchers on EI had participated in these previous ISSID conferences and were keen to both continue the symposia as well as introduce some new presenters engaged in exciting new research programs. This special issue is the outcome of two symposia on EI which formed part of the 2013 ISSID conference held in Barcelona. One symposium was on the applications of EI in education, whilst the other had the broader focus of advancing the construct and its applications. Following the ISSID conference, Dr. Tony Vernon, editor of *Personality and Individual Differences* issued an invitation to publish the symposia papers in a special issue of the journal for which we are most grateful.

Participants in the EI symposia were invited to contribute either a paper based on their presented topic or, if this was to be or already published, to contribute another EI paper to the special issue. Thus only some of the papers correspond to work presented at the conference but the themes of general construct development and of EI as applied in education are both represented in the collection of papers published here.

Current EI research is very much focused on examining both the ability and trait EI constructs. Ability EI is assessed by problem-solving tests which are similar to those used in intelligence tests. Trait EI is measured using self-report tests and has been found to be an emotion-related dispositional trait which forms part of the personality domain. Certain ability EI sub-scales have been found to be correlated with intelligence test scores, but ability EI has not to date been convincingly established as an intelligence component. On the other hand, trait EI has been argued by some to already be largely accounted for in contemporary personality models and scales. However, research suggests that there is sufficient variance accounted for by trait EI to continue its examination and contribution to individual differences psychology. The work presented in this special issue includes studies of both trait and ability EI.

An important aspect of the study of EI is establishing its associations with cognition and personality, relationships which need to be explored for both ability and trait EI. In a study using magnetic resonance spectroscopy to explore the brain metabolite correlates of ability EI (Timoshanko et al.), choline concentration in brain regions associated with

emotional information-processing were found to be correlated with ability EI sub-scale scores. An EEG study using the Trait Meta-Mood Scale (Toleganova et al.) found that the TMMS predicted higher power in the theta and gamma bands whilst viewing a fear-inducing film clip. These results may reflect a greater investment of mental energy in emotion regulation in high TMMS scorers. In contrast to these studies of EI in relation to brain structure and function Fallon et al. focus on the relationship between ability EI and performance on a decision-making task using an Antarctic rescue scenario; ability EI did not (perhaps surprisingly) moderate the impact of negative task feedback, but was associated with greater information-search activity whilst performing the task.

A detailed examination of the associations of trait EI and personality was undertaken by Pérez-González and Sanchez-Ruiz. This study used the full form of the TEIQue and the NEO PI-R, allowing facet-level associations to be examined. Factor analysis revealed a distinct oblique trait EI factor within the Big Five space. Trait EI was found to be highly correlated with the general factor of personality (GFP), with regression and factor-analytic results indicating that trait EI can be considered as a proxy for the GFP.

Examining the associations of EI with theoretically-related variables is a key aspect of validation of this construct, and several papers in this issue provide new results in this area. The first study of the associations of EI with academic performance in pre-adolescents is reported by Billings et al., who employed the newly-developed Early Years version of the Swinburne University Emotional Intelligence Test – Early Years (SUEIT-EY). This study showed that the Understanding and Analysing Emotions branch of this scale were associated with both literacy and numeracy achievement in this age group.

Results from studies on EI and positive dispositional attributes show that trait EI is associated with compassion satisfaction in health professionals (Zeidner & Hadar), and individual resources such as resilience (Di Fabio & Saklofske). In the clinical domain, Kristensen et al demonstrate the existence of negative associations between trait EI and ADHD symptoms. An intervention study (Vesely et al.) demonstrated an impact of an EI training programme on both EI and on related psychological well-being variables in trainee teachers, suggesting that such training could assist in building resilience in the context of high-stress occupations.

Two studies of trait EI in managers (Siegling, Nielsen et al., Siegling, Sfeir et al.) contribute to the EI/leadership literature. The first of these compared the trait EI scores of leaders and non-leaders in the same organisation, with leaders having higher scores, suggesting that trait EI is important in leadership and management roles. The second study showed managers' trait EI scores were above those for the relevant standardisation sample, but with the overall effect being mainly attributable to higher scores in female managers. In the area of work-related behaviours, trait EI was found to be negatively related to non-work presenteeism, i.e. engaging in non-work-related activities during work time (Wan et al.).

Cross-cultural trait EI differences were examined by Gokcen et al., demonstrating both Chinese/UK differences in EI profiles and a moderating effect of questionnaire language for bilinguals, which is in agreement with the cultural accommodation effect, i.e. bilinguals responded in a manner consistent with the culture corresponding to the questionnaire language.

Test development is clearly a key part of EI research. Billings et al. employed a new EI test for pre-adolescents in their study discussed above, whilst two other papers (Allen et al., Mikolajczak et al.) describe the creation of short versions of existing tests, the Situational Test of Emotional Understanding Brief and the Short Profile of Emotional Competence. The development of these tests is to be welcomed, as the ready availability of shorter tests should encourage more researchers to include EI measures in their studies even in projects which are not centred on the study of EI.

An emerging area of EI research, which has theoretical implications for how the construct is understood, is the study of the “dark side” of EI, i.e. the use of emotional capabilities for non-prosocial purposes. Two papers (Austin et al., Nagler et al.) focus on managing the emotions of others (in particular non-prosocial emotional manipulation) and examine associations with trait EI and the personality Dark Triad. Both papers show that emotional manipulation is associated with all three Dark Triad traits and also examine potential moderators of the EI/emotional manipulation association; this is a key point in characterising the emotionally manipulative individual, since high EI is only likely to be associated with non-prosocial behaviour if it forms part of a trait pattern, characterised in these studies as high EI combined with low Agreeableness, high psychopathy or high narcissism.

We trust these invited papers will serve to highlight contemporary advances in EI research and application and to also stimulate further efforts to critically examine the role of both ability and train EI in the study of individual differences. Thank you to the authors for contributing their important papers and doing so in a timely and efficient manner.

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January 20, 2014.